

Personal Religion in Relation to General Culture.

The value of Christian life upon earth depends largely upon the influence for good which it exercises. "Ye are the salt of the earth." "Ye are the light of the world." Now a life tells just in proportion to the power that resides in it. No doubt holiness is power; there can be no spiritual power without it. But knowledge is also power; and sanctified knowledge is the highest form of power known upon earth. The two greatest examples of widespread and lasting influence which the world has probably ever known are found in Moses and St. Paul. But they were both highly educated men; men of powerful and cultivated intellects and possessed of such learning as it had been possible for them to acquire.

Look down the page of Christian history, and ask who were the men whose influence was most felt in their own day, whose influence certainly has been most widely felt in succeeding generations, and you will invariably find that they were the men of sound learning as well as of genuine piety. It must be so. Soundness in learning is opposed to error; as also to all that is light, trifling, superficial, and worthless. In every department of human enquiry it implies the possession of truth; and it is truth which tells. The empire of truth shall one day fill the world.

Experience teaches the same lesson. Whose are the works which most help to form men's minds, to give noble and elevating thoughts, to stimulate and encourage the education of the race? Are they not the works of gifted and cultivated men—of men whose perception of truth was clear, whose grasp of truth was firm, and who possessed the power of expressing truth in forcible, if not in beautiful and attractive language? Nor has sanctified learning yet lost its power. Would that it were more abundant. It is perhaps one of the special dangers of the present day that the calls to active labor are so urgent, that Christian men are not only tempted to rush untrained and ill-furnished into the conflict with evil, but that they neglect ever after to discipline their minds, and to frequent those fountains of wisdom which are open to them. If the Christian Church is to exercise its legitimate influence in this age of progress, its standard of attainment must certainly not be lowered: the weapons of past generations may have done good service in their day, but we cannot now always depend upon them: we must at least keep abreast of the age, if we cannot hope to lead it; we must remember that goodness is one source, but not the only source of power.

I infer then that there need be no antagonism between personal religion and general culture: on the contrary the alliance between them should be close and cordial. The aim of personal religion is the formation of Christian character; but character embraces the whole man; and no part of our being can be ignored or neglected without loss ensuing.

This only would I say in conclusion, that we ought to exercise much discrimination in selecting food for the mind. As there is poison in the world of nature, so there is poison in the world of thought. Let your thoughts, wrote Paul to the Philippians, be occupied with things true, not with deeds and words of falsehood; things venerable and becoming, not such as are mean, ignoble and contemptible; things just and righteous, not such as rob God of His honor and man of his right: things pure, not unclean and immoral; things lovely, not hateful; of good report, not scandalous and disgraceful; things virtuous not vicious; things praiseworthy, not those deserving only of condemnation. "The great exploits and great characters of history; the noble works and self-denying sacrifices of charity; the manly, vigorous exertions of public and private life; the lofty hopes and stirring interests of our country and our time; the great conceptions and glorious words of writers illustrious and immortal; above all, the disclosures of truth divine and eternal made to us in the inspired Word of Revelation—these are the things in which the mind and soul of man ought rather to expatiate. To have the heart pre-occupied with these; to turn to them from petty, paltry, worthless trifles; from idle, scandalous, slanderous tales;

from stories probably false and certainly mischievous, is a safeguard such as none can despise who either knows anything of the plague of his own heart, or of the festering sores which are eating everywhere into the body of our social life."

But mental culture however wisely regulated must not end with Self. His is a failure "that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God;" and may we not add, towards his neighbor also? There is another treasure besides money; and a man may be a diligent student, and yet be living to himself, and himself alone. The daily hoarding of intellectual stores, the daily revelling in literary pursuits may become the luxury of a refined selfishness. The pursuit of knowledge may be a nobler pursuit than that of pleasure; and the philosopher is at no pains to conceal his contempt for the sensualist; but in either case the motive may begin and end in Self. Let the student then read with a view to active work in his generation: let him read in order to communicate, to instruct, to influence. Let him read not for himself only, but for others. Knowledge is power; but power is responsibility: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."—EMILUS BAILEY.

The Promise.

BY JOHN MILTON.

"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."—Acts 2:39.

The gospel call is very extended—to all that come within its range. But what a different aspect is given to things by those words of Jesus, Matth. 22:14, which say, that many be called but few chosen. We see by the preceding who the called are; but the next question is, who are the chosen? As our Lord says, "Not all that say, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matth. 7:21. The question is, what is the will of the Father? that we should be his obedient children. In John 15:7 we read, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Also in the tenth verse, "If ye keep my commands ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commands and abide in his love. How are we to know when we are God's children, and that we know Him, whom to know is life eternal? Read 1 John 2:3, 4: "And hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commands." He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commands, is a liar and the truth is not in him. So it follows that the chosen are the obedient.

To obey God, it is necessary that you know what he requires of you, and in this contradictory age the only sure way is to do as those of Berea, who examined the scriptures, that they might know whether those things were so that were spoken of by Paul. Acts 17:11. The blessed Word is the only true test of the truth or falsity of a preacher's remark. Read Isaiah 8:20. Some say that one preacher has just as good a chance to know what the Word says on these points as another; but it is not a question of capability. The chief priests and elders of Israel were just as capable of recognizing Jesus as the true Messiah, as any one, and still it is known to all why they did not. How many of our teachers and preachers are willing to become the true exponents of the doctrine of Christ? Very few. You say, "Why?" Because to do so would require a greater sacrifice than one in ten thousand is willing to make. Like the chief priests they would rather live at ease, and with hosts of friends, than verify the words of the Apostle, "That all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." If they preached the truth as it is in Christ, they would make enemies, where they now make friends; for the Gospel does not tolerate the corrupt methods of making money and friends of the present day. Read the 22nd and 23rd chapters of Matthew, in proof of this.

In conclusion is it not very evident that though the gospel call is to all, still the chosen are few. Not because there is any barrier in the way, but because the stubborn will of man needs to be

broken, till he is able to say from the inmost recesses of his soul, "Thy will, O Lord, and not mine."—San Francisco, Cal., 38 Mary St.

Let Us Live Faithful.

BY H. N. COBER.

In looking over the world in our every day life and observing carefully the many different occupations which the people carry on and perform, it often makes me think, what does it all mean? Some are enjoying themselves with worldly pleasures, others are lying on beds of affliction, and some have passed over the river never to return. Let us remember then that we were not placed here upon the earth simply for nothing, but if we desire to be somebody, we must work and win and also keep up our reputation; and this is not all, we must also do something for Jesus. He died to save us; He was nailed upon the cross to save his people. Let us then learn a lesson from this.

We all know that we have to die sometime. Let us then prepare ourselves and live faithful unto death. There are very few people living at the present day, who have not lost a friend, a father, mother, sister or brother, and oh how grand it will be if we live faithful that we can meet and shake hands with them, when we get there. Yes; though millions are now sleeping in the silent grave, the great day that comes will bring them all forth and they must stand before God and be judged according to their deeds done in the body; and oh how sad it would be if we should not be prepared, and must hear the words from Him, "depart from me I never knew you."

Let us then remember that Jesus gave himself for us and if we do what is right and just, when we come to leave this world, he will say, "Well, done good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord."

A Present Helper.

"I may be faint and weary," says the believer, "but my God fainteth not. I may alter and fluctuate, as to my frames; but my Redeemer is unchangeably the same. I might utterly fail and come to nothing, if left to myself; but I cannot be so left to myself, for the Spirit of Truth hath said, 'I will never leave nor forsake thee.' He will renew my strength, either by changing my weakness into strength, or by enduing me with his own power. He is wise, to see and provide for all my dangers: he is rich, to relieve and succor in all my wants: he is gracious, to hear and answer all my prayers: he is omnipotent, to deliver and defend me from all my enemies; he is faithful, to perfect and perform all his own promises: he is eternal and immortal, to bless my poor depending soul with eternal blessedness and immortality."

O what a great and glorious Savior for such a mean and worthless sinner! O what a bountiful, gracious, and indulgent Friend for such a base and insignificant rebel!—AMBROSE SERLE.

The Effect of Goodness.—Rom. 2:4.

In the old persecuting times there lived in Cheap-side one who feared God and attended the secret meetings of the saints; and near him there dwelt a poor cobbler, whose wants were often relieved by the merchant; but the poor man was a cross-grained being, and, most ungratefully, from hope of reward, laid an information against his kind friend on the score of religion. This accusation would have brought the merchant to death by burning if he had not found a means of escape. Returning to the house, the injured man did not change his generous behavior to the malignant cobbler, but, on the contrary, was more liberal than ever. The cobbler was, however, in an ill mood and avoided the good man with all his might, running away at his approach. One day he was obliged to meet him face to face, and the Christian man asked him gently, "Why do you shun me?" I am not your enemy. I know all that you did to injure me, but I never had an angry thought against you. I have helped you and am willing to do so as long as I live, only let us be friends." Do you marvel that they clasped hands?—SPURGEON.